



Mississippi National River  
and Recreation Area



Wilderness  
Inquiry

## Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures (UWCA)

# Minneapolis Public Schools Program Summary

### About the UWCA

The Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures (UWCA) is an outdoor canoe program focused on getting Twin Cities youth on the Mississippi River. Each UWCA trip provides students an opportunity to experience a different, special section of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. The UWCA is a partner program between Wilderness Inquiry, Mississippi River Fund, and the National Park Service.

### UWCA and the Minneapolis Public Schools

The UWCA has partnered with the Minneapolis Public Schools to bring this outdoor experience to 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders from across the city. Through paddling and exploring the Mississippi River, the UWCA program teaches awareness and stewardship of local and global resources to students. In addition to creating a connection with nature, the program is in line with Minnesota Academic Standards, STEM goals, and the Arts for Academic Achievement strategy.

### Your Role in the Classroom

Curriculum guides are offered to teachers to make the most of their student's UWCA experience. The lessons will help to connect student experiences on the river to learning in the classroom. In addition to lessons, teachers will help students to create a journal of their river adventure (see section on recommended educational materials). The role of teachers and support staff in the UWCA program is to support this learning by preparing the class through related coursework, sharing in the fun and educational experience of paddling downriver with the students, and following up with activities that reinforce the trip's themes.

### Your Role on the River

Teachers, support staff, and chaperones will be assigned to a canoe when they arrive at the launch site. Canoe "sterners" will sit in the rear of each canoe. These sterners have been trained to steer and will also provide some interpretation along the route. Once the canoe passengers have been settled, they will divide into "pod" groups of three canoes. A pod leader will be designated to keep the group together and direct the pod's movements on the river throughout the trip. To ensure a great ride, support the pod leader and sterner on



the trip. Ask the students questions about sites you encounter and their impressions of being on the river.

### **Safety & Orientation**

Wilderness Inquiry staff will provide orientation and instruction on river safety and paddling. Rest assured, you and all other paddlers will be secure on this trip. In fact, so far, there have been no canoe tips in the history of the UWCA program. You can do your part to prevent accidents by being a role model to students: Wear your Personal Floatation Device (PFD) properly when on or near the river, and demonstrate that you understand the river safety instructions provided at the safety talk.

### **Lunch Break**

Once the first stretch of paddling and exploring has been completed, all participants will break for lunch in a designated area. Bathrooms will be provided nearby. In addition to resting and eating, this will also give teachers, support staff, chaperones, and students a chance to break into smaller groups to discuss their experiences. Either before or after lunch, a National Park Service Ranger will give a brief presentation about the trip. They will explain the concept of "Leave No Trace," which means that all paddlers are responsible for picking up waste, minimizing their impact on the river, and leaving nothing behind.

### **Re-launch & Finish**

After the break, canoes will re-launch and head downriver towards their ultimate destination. After the final landing, everyone will work together to collect gear, dispose of waste, and get the canoes off of the river. Once these tasks have been completed, the UWCA trip will conclude with a group reflection on the day's discoveries.

Buses will pick up groups at this landing site at the designated times. If personal vehicles have been left at the launch site, teachers will have to make special arrangements to pick them up.

## **UWCA Field Trip: Routes and Objectives**

### **5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Mississippi River Connections**

On this adventure, we will explore the river from North Mississippi Regional Park to the East River Flats. A lunch break will be taken at Boom Island. Students will learn about historic, natural, and personal connections to the river and why it is important for them to protect these waters. All students will keep a journal of their experiences throughout the program. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade trip will focus on the following objectives:



1. Students will identify how they are connected to the Mississippi River- directly as in the river providing the student's drinking water and indirectly such as living in a city built here because of the waterpower provided by St. Anthony Falls.
2. Students will observe the storm drain outfalls along the river as well as the litter in the river and will begin to understand that streets are connected to the river via the storm drains.
3. Students may identify how their actions affect the river.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade: Mississippi River Gorge**

On this adventure, we will explore the river from the East River Flats to Hidden Falls Park. A lunch break will be taken on the West River Sand Flats. Students will learn how this landscape has changed over time due to natural changes in the climate and human forces. All students will keep a journal of their experiences throughout the program. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade trip will focus on the following objectives:

1. The student will view and be able to describe evidence of geological time.
2. The student will observe and describe examples of human activities (including engineered systems such as storm drains and dams) that have impacted the river environment.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade: B'dote**

On this adventure, we will explore the river from Hidden Falls Park to Fort Snelling State Park. A lunch break will be taken on Picnic Island. Students will learn about the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers as a place where Dakota and Euro-American cultures came together and interacted with nature and each other in both positive and negative ways. All students will keep a journal of their experiences throughout the program. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade trip will focus on the following objectives:

1. The student will observe and describe examples of how the two rivers and two cultures have interacted over time and the importance of the rivers to the history of interactions between Euro-American cultures and Dakota

Indian people in the fur trade and early white settlement periods.

2. The student will observe and describe examples of multiple perspectives in art, writing, historical sources, and cultural beliefs, with special focus on the different cultural perspectives on relationships between people and nature and between people.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Global River Futures**

On this adventure, we will explore the river from Fort Snelling to the Smith Avenue Bridge in Saint Paul. A lunch break will be taken at Crosby Farm



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Regional Park. Students will learn about watersheds, water quality in the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, and how our day-to-day activities can have an impact on local and global ecosystems. All students will keep a journal of their experiences throughout the program. The 8th<sup>th</sup> grade trip will focus on the following objectives:

1. Students will draw water samples from the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, and perform basic field analysis to measure contaminants in the two rivers.
2. Students will examine maps to identify land usage along each river's course.
3. Students will find connections between land use and water quality.
4. Students will understand the relationship between the Mississippi River water quality and the health of the planet.